

all good things by Fluffifullness

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Summary:

If the world ever ended, how would it happen?

Eddie still remembers going through a brief phase in his junior year of college where he read dozens of newspaper and magazine articles about that. One second, he was worrying about Ebola or cholera or, hell, maybe it was literally the bubonic plague, and the next, he was giving serious thought to the possibility of apocalypse-by-pandemic. Which of course begged the question – hey, what else could end the world?

The answer, then and now, is “a lot of things.”

(A post-IT Chapter 2 apocalypse fic.)

all good things

Author's Note:

So, I'd like to start this off with a few notes - just to offer a good idea of what you can expect of this fic!

First - of course I'll endeavor to explain the circumstances of the apocalypse I've decided to go with in the text itself, but if Pennywise Spider Babies seems extremely left field and you're just wondering, *what the fuck?* - I got it from the book, which I have not read but know a fair bit about thanks to my roommate. This fic will be solidly post-2019 movie canon (aside from casually unkillling Stan and Eddie), but Pennywise babies aside, I'll also lift a few little things I know of from book canon.

Second - my goal is to make this a nice ensemble fic for the entire Losers Club, hence the multi-ship tags! I am absolutely going to play favorites, but I still aim to give everyone POV bits even if I do wind up devoting marginally more time to Richie/Eddie. I wouldn't have tagged Bike, for example, if I wasn't gonna write it as more than a side pairing - as you're about to see!

And third - I have Things Planned here, but not a complete beginning-to-end plan like I had for my ghost fic! I've never done an apocalypse fic and mostly just wanted to try it because I think it'll be fun, so to an extent I'm going to let this fic decide what it wants to be. :)

On that note: This is an end-of-the-world story, so I can't guarantee no harm will befall anyone (perhaps I can even guarantee... that it will) BUT I *can* guarantee that no one is going to die.

If the world ever ended, how would it happen?

Eddie still remembers going through a brief phase in his junior year of college where he read dozens of newspaper and magazine articles about that. One second, he was worrying about Ebola or cholera or, hell, maybe it was literally the bubonic plague, and the next, he was giving serious thought to the possibility of apocalypse-by-pandemic. Which of course begged the question – hey, what else could end the world?

The answer, then and now, is “a lot of things.”

“Because why pick one? Why pick just *one fucking thing*?” Eddie snaps, throwing his hands up at the sky and nearly whacking Ben in the head with his torque wrench in the process. His feet still hurt from all the walking-slash-running they did *yesterday*, and the sun reflecting up off the asphalt of this particular stretch of road isn’t doing anything for the sweat dripping down Eddie’s back. It’s making him extra jumpy, imagining he’s feeling the tiny, hairy legs of little spiders running across his skin.

As if on cue, Ben puts some extra distance between himself and Eddie and says, “Because they’re babies?”

“They were babies before they hatched,” Mike reminds them. He sounds almost patient, but his voice is still missing the hint of amusement that would have separated it from the quietly despondent mood he seems to have fully settled into at this point.

“Yeah, now they’re like overenthusiastic toddlers making macaroni art for the fridge,” Richie says with a languorous stretch half-disguised as a shrug. Speaking around the tail end of a yawn, he adds, “Messy.”

“Except the macaroni is humanity and we killed the proud parent of hundreds,” Eddie mutters. “Messy.”

“At least we managed that,” Bev says. “I think I’m better off not knowing what Pennywise hanging the mess up with magnets would’ve looked like.”

Richie casts a not-so-surreptitious glance in Mike’s direction. He still hasn’t cracked the genuine grin Richie’s spent half the morning

angling for, but then, none of them have. Even Richie's wide, jokey smiles have all been pretty forced, but Eddie doesn't begrudge him his own methods of coping. It's been a rough week, and Eddie can't be the only one who'd rather not think too hard about the writing on the wall.

"Probably use those alphabet magnets," Richie says. "Or, you know, clowns. You guys think they'll grow up to be"—?

"Beep beep, Richie," Stan interrupts with a halfhearted glare. He's quick to turn that glare back on his phone, which is still plugged in to one of even-Eddie-doesn't-know *how* many portable chargers he has stuffed into his extra-large camping backpack. He still hasn't bothered to cut the price tags off of it; there's probably nothing to be done about the plastic security tag either way, not that it matters.

"Any l-l-luck with that?" Bill asks, nodding at the phone.

"Not out here," Stan sighs in obvious frustration. Bev shoots him a sympathetic look to echo the one Eddie attempts; Derry is one thing, but any given tree-lined country road in Maine? The alien spider-clown babies probably didn't have to lift a single spindly leg to cut off cell service out here. The natural isolation of deep, dark woods and scarcely-traveled roads. It's as much a curse as it is a blessing.

As they come up on a tight curve in the road, Eddie digs in the pocket of his jeans and pulls out his map. He really regrets not snapping up a spare copy when he had the chance; this one's already looking concerningly worn, as often as he unfolds it to double and triple and quadruple check every suggestion he makes.

He doesn't even really *need* to; signs and landmarks have been relatively few and far between today, their next turn-off is miles – and hopefully a thievable car – away, and Eddie's sense of direction is plenty good on its own.

He clears his throat to get everyone's attention. "I think we can make it to this town before dark," he says, pointing.

Richie leans over his shoulder to look. "In real people distances, how far is that from us?"

"I don't have an exact number..."

Richie shrugs. "So guess."

"Most of the day, alright? Twenty miles, maybe a little more."

Ben sucks in a breath. "That's pretty far."

"Yeah, it's most of the day," Eddie grumps.

Richie's breath stops tickling the back of Eddie's neck, but no sooner has he let Eddie drift a little further ahead of him than he bounds up to walk alongside him. Eddie lowers the map to watch him out of the corner of his eye.

"That's still good news, right? Stan can get an update on where Patty is, or better yet we just run into her coming down from Portland. And Eds"—

"Doesn't have a working phone, remember?"

"Fine, offer to lend you mine rescinded," Richie says.

"Yours has been dead for at *least* a day and we both know it," Eddie huffs. Richie doesn't have a response for that except to grumble something about borrowing one of Stan's pilfered chargers; Eddie doesn't bother with a rejoinder, and Richie, to his credit, takes his cue to drop the subject without putting up a fight.

The thing is, even if Eddie hadn't dropped his stupid phone in all the confusion – even if he could somehow still get a call from Myra right this second, he doesn't think he'd want to answer it. He's tried rationalizing *that* to himself all kinds of ways, but at the end of the day he just feels awful about it. He should be worried about Myra, or at least worried that she's worried about him. He's tried and almost succeeded at convincing himself that he is, but he's not like Stan. He can't see himself insisting on a long trek halfway across the state of Maine just to reunite with his wife.

Stan, on the other hand, is so single-mindedly focused on that goal that he doesn't even acknowledge Richie's optimistic remark beyond a slight nod of his head. His eyes stay glued to the signal bars in the

top corner of his phone. Eddie's a little impressed that he hasn't tripped once, and that he can stand not to repeatedly scan the edges of the forest for signs of danger.

No one says much else until Bill suggests that they break for a quick meal and a sorely-needed rest. According to Eddie's watch, they only actually spend about thirty minutes sitting in the grass by the side of the road, but every second of it feels slow and heavy with the threat of danger. Eddie keeps the wrench within easy reach to his right, while to his left Richie sits close and keeps up a steady rhythm of murmured jokes and quiet chewing.

Eddie's eyes linger on the hand Richie rests on top of his baseball bat. He looks anything but prepared to fend off any sudden attacks – all dark undereye circles and droopy, tired shoulders, probably no thanks to his turn as lookout last night – but that does nothing to detract from the odd sense of security that settles over Eddie, watching Richie rhythmically drumming his fingers against the wood while an easy smile settles over his face.

It might be the first genuine one Eddie's seen from him today.

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“M-M-Mike. Mikey.”

Mike blinks away the scattered images that cling like wet paper to the insides of his eyelids. He can almost see afterimages suspended in the dark in front of him – deep, dark water, brittle, yellowed papers, bloodied knuckles, bulging sacs of eggs splitting open, vomiting thick, crawling streams of hungry eldritch horrors – but there is also Bill, Big Bill with one hand planted firmly on Mike's sweat-soaked shoulder and the other keeping himself balanced as he kneels beside Mike's sleeping bag.

“Bill. Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you up,” Mike whispers, maybe too hollowly to suffice for a genuine apology.

"I w-wasn't sleeping, r-r-remember?" Bill says, nodding toward the spot he'd staked out as a sort of unofficial lookout post when he volunteered to take the first watch.

"Right... So, uh, my turn?" Mike guesses, already loosening the zipper on the side of the bag and bracing himself for the chill of the night air.

"No, n-not yet," Bill says, almost too loud. He uses the hand he'd been propping himself up with to nudge Mike back, nearly causing himself to topple over in the process. "It's only b-been a few hours. You were..."

"Having a nightmare," Mike fills in, scrubbing a hand down his face and sitting up anyway.

Bill doesn't say anything. He doesn't have to; Mike can just barely make out his expression by the light of the moon, but even if he couldn't, he'd know.

"Thanks for waking me," he says, thinking better of telling any obvious lies. He isn't fine, and they both know it.

They also both know how important it is to get as much sleep as they can before they have to continue on their way tomorrow, which is why Mike is mildly surprised when Bill asks if he wants to sit up with him for a while – "i-if you want to, s-so we could talk."

Take both our minds off all of this, he doesn't say, but Mike has a feeling the exclusion is intentional. Even *Richie's* noticed his deepening malaise, if his habitual cycle of wisecracks followed by furtive glances in Mike's direction have been anything to go by. Of course Bill wouldn't have missed it, and of course Bill would be the first to stop carefully avoiding the subject.

"Yeah, okay," Mike agrees, because it's Bill, and because he's missed him. Because he's missed having talks – even hard ones – and that's the closest thing to a silver lining he's seen in days.

He casts a look around at the others as he stands and stretches some of the ache from his limbs.

Ben and Bev are the only ones who look genuinely comfortable. It probably helps that they've got an extra sleeping bag to share, but Mike thinks it has more to do with being wrapped up in each other's arms. Meanwhile, Eddie's already migrated so close to Richie – or maybe vice versa, as much as Richie seems to toss and turn at night – that he could easily reach out and touch his back if he were awake to notice his change of position.

And if he didn't sleep with his arms and head all neatly zipped into a hooded sleeping bag. Richie still hasn't gotten tired of teasing him for sleeping like a mummy, but he never says a word about how close they are every morning when they wake up. Closer every time.

Stan, on the other hand, looks no more restful than Mike must have, curled up all alone. His brow is furrowed, and his phone is clenched so tightly in his hand that Mike worries it'll break. He knows Stan has its volume turned up as high as it will go, and he's seen him startle awake and immediately check the screen enough times to guess that he hears it ringing in his dreams.

"Everyone's fine," Bill murmurs, catching Mike by the wrist and following the line of his gaze.

"No, they aren't," Mike sighs. That's another thing they both know, like it or not. They're all alive, but even that isn't a guarantee anymore, and the only way "fine" can exist alongside the end of the world is in the lyrics of an R.E.M. song.

He should've—

Bill gives his wrist a light tug, and Mike lets himself be guided back a short distance to Bill's spot. Close enough to have a good view of the entire group, and far enough that they should be able to avoid waking the others with the sounds of their voices. Eddie may have underestimated the distance they would have had to travel today to make it as far as another town, but at least they still managed to break free of the heaviest parts of the forest; from here, back-to-back by wordless agreement, the two of them can see far enough in either direction that they'd have ample time to alert the others if anything or anyone broke through the surrounding treeline.

“Look,” Bill says, pointing.

Mike tenses so abruptly that Bill lowers his hand and turns to look at him. They both scan the other’s field of vision for swaying, lurching figures, semi-human or otherwise, and only then does Mike follow the line of Bill’s finger *up* .

At first he expects there to be some sign of danger there, too – something worse than the common bats that seem to bother Eddie so much, like rising smoke or another of the half-formed, twisted shapes those *things* seem to enjoy trying on.

He tries to shoot Bill a confused look when he fails to find anything of the sort, but Bill hardly seems to notice. He’s short enough to use Mike as a headrest without having to sacrifice his upright posture – all this time, and he’s hardly grown at all. Hardly changed. His calm, like his alarm, is just as contagious as it was when they were kids.

“The stars,” he says, simply. “They never l-look like this back in L.A.”

Mike blinks back up at the sky. Without Bill’s steady weight there to ground him, he thinks the incredible vastness of it would be dizzying. It seems like it could go on forever, past the trees that interrupt it like so many jagged teeth, past the ground beneath them, a perfect sphere littered with thousands upon thousands of tiny lights.

It’s been a long time, Mike thinks, and because he isn’t lying, he doesn’t pretend that the sight is any more familiar to him than it is to Bill.

“They’re beautiful,” he says. He does *not* say that the L.A. sky might not be so different, sooner or later. No people, no light – just stars. It sounds a lot more idyllic if you put it like that. If you don’t think about why, or how, or who could’ve stopped it.

Should’ve known—

“This isn’t on you, Mikey,” Bill says to the soft white glow burning unfathomably far above them. “This thing – th-these *things*, they came from out there somewhere. They should have never been our problem. And you – you did more than any of us. You couldn’t have

known It had”—

“That It could reproduce?” That being the so-called “Eater of Worlds” might mean a little more than cursing a single New England town for millions of years?

Bill doesn’t flinch in the slightest. His answer comes with the easy, single-minded certainty he’s always been so capable of.

“It didn’t want you to know. B-but even if you had?”

Mike answers with silence, but now it’s the silence of an open door. Listening, waiting.

“Saving the whole damn world isn’t a one-man job,” Bill says. “Even s-saving an entire town isn’t. It’s too much responsibility to put on you, or – or any of us.”

“But all the research I did – all the waiting, and planning”—

“Helped us all survive killing It in the f-first place,” Bill reminds him. “And n-now it’s *everyone’s* job to make sure we *keep* surviving. You get t-to share it, Mikey.”

Mike wipes at the tears that have started to roll down his cheeks. Bill doesn’t say anything else, but he does reach back to take Mike’s hand in his. Maybe it’s just the after-dark chill in the air, but his skin feels warm enough against Mike’s that he can imagine it driving out all the worst of his regrets. He feels... lighter, even if just a little.

“I’ll do my best,” he promises. “Thanks, Bill.”

“Hey, that’s what losers are for, right?”

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There’s one thing Richie can say for the probable, ongoing end of the world, and that’s that it just about maxes out his ability to worry

about the little things. He can't imagine too many other scenarios in which he could wake up curled against Eddie – or as much against Eddie as two sleeping bags of separation will allow – and not feel the need to immediately crack some stupid joke about it.

He opens his eyes to the sight of *Eddie's* eyes practically boring a hole into him, and while Richie's too sleep-dazed to actually read that expression, it's enough that he doesn't look repulsed, or irritated, or even uncomfortable – which is quite a feat, because Richie abso-fucking-lutely *is* uncomfortable, several nights into sleeping on the cold, hard ground.

Eddie studies him long enough for Richie to realize that he's somehow managed to drape his own sleeping bag-covered legs across Eddie's. He moves them with an apologetic grunt and sits up.

He's somehow stiffer and achier than when he first fell asleep, but at least he slept through the night this time; the grassy field around them is just beginning to light up with the first gray notes of dawn, and Stan's already finished packing away his own sleeping bag. He looks half-dead from exhaustion, but he looks determined, too, and Richie wants to believe that's a good thing. That he's holding on to hope.

"Sleep well?" Eddie asks, grimacing a little as the cool morning air hits him. Richie tosses him a spare jacket, which Eddie takes with a surprised little smile.

"No way. I'm giving this place a terrible review on Yelp," Richie announces. "But on the bright side – no zombies, no wannabe murderers. So I guess they earned two stars, anyway. Maybe even two and a half. What do you think?"

Eddie shudders. "Ugh. Don't fucking jinx it."

"What, the murderers?" Richie says. "I think camping in the woods already"—

"No, asshole, zombies," Eddie retorts with an exasperated roll of his eyes. He starts folding his sleeping bag back up with a little more force than is strictly necessary. "Monsters, fine. People going off the

fucking rails, fine”—

“*Fine?*” Richie echoes.

—“but a highly contagious plague that kills you *and* makes you a fucking monster”—

“Isn’t real?” Stan says.

“Could be real for all we know!” Eddie huffs, throwing his hands up to emphasize the point he’s trying to make. “I’m just saying, it better not be!”

“I think zombies would’ve been enough by themselves,” Ben offers, startling Richie enough that he turns to see both him and Bev casting bleary glances in their direction. “Without any of the extra things.”

“...I guess that’s true,” Eddie sighs, looking slightly mollified.

“I wouldn’t give them any ideas, though,” Bev murmurs. She’s already got her gun in her hands, which would be a lot more terrifying if it weren’t for how confidently she holds it. Richie can hardly blame her for wanting to make sure her weapon is still right where it should be so soon after waking up; the longer they go without any confrontations, the more likely one seems to happen.

But *that* actually does feel a little like jinxing it.

Richie finally manages to get his sleeping bag stuffed back into its too-small bag and then watches as Mike and Bill start to stir a few feet away. He’d feel bad for semi-accidentally waking everyone if it weren’t for how strained Stan looks. Just seeing the drawn look on his face is enough to make Richie’s own chest tighten in sympathy; he doubts he’d be doing any better if Eddie weren’t here with him right now.

So that’s two things, he guesses, two silver linings. They boil down to one, anyway, and that’s Eddie.

Eddie, who forgets his fear of hypothetical flesh-eating corpses as soon as it’s time to get them back on their way to the next town. Eddie, who falls back to where Richie starts to lag behind the rest of

the group and then makes everyone wait while he deftly bandages the blister that's formed on Richie's heel. Eddie, who trades bites of a breakfast granola bar for sips of bottled water like the entire exchange is some kind of argument he and Richie are having. *You're not eating enough for this much walking, Richie, this is basic fucking wilderness survival.*

Eddie, who visibly oscillates between hiding behind Richie and leaping in front of him when a car appears from around a bend in the road and then slows to a gradual stop several yards ahead of them.

Eddie, who settles on the former, finally, but still keeps one hand closed like a vice around Richie's wrist while the other holds his wrench-that-doesn't-look-like-a-wrench like a shield in front of him.

Richie doesn't even hesitate to put himself between Eddie and whatever the hell watches them through dark-tinted windows, unmoving. Bill and Mike creep up to stand beside him, and Richie hears the faint click of Beverly's gun cocking somewhere to his right.

The driver's door swings open, fast as a bird spreading its wings.

Author's Note:

And so it begins! I'm really experimenting with this one, so consider letting me know if something really does/doesn't work! Constructive criticism is perfectly welcome if you happen to have any!